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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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Yugoslavia's Serb-Albanian Dispute:
Who Is Violating Whose Human Rights?

Summary

Serbian claims that ethnic Albanians are systematically violating Serbian human rights in ethnically troubled Kosovo Province are, in our view, largely unfounded. While Serbs are subject to some harassment, the evidence fails to suggest widespread, nationalistically-motivated abuses promoted or tolerated by the province's ethnic Albanian authorities. Serbian officials and media are advancing these claims at least in part to discredit Kosovo Albanian leaders and justify stronger Serbian influence in the province.

By contrast, Kosovo Albanians are largely justified in claiming that provincial authorities, under strong Serbian and federal pressure, are abridging the basic rights of Albanians accorded all other Yugoslav ethnic groups, including freedom of speech, assembly, and self-determination. Albanians in the neighboring Republic of Macedonia are subject to even more blatant human rights violations, including destruction of property, the banning of Albanian as a language of instruction in the schools, cultural and religious restrictions, and aggressive prosecution for peaceful protests.

We expect that abuses of Albanian rights will grow in the next year or two as Serbia makes some headway in its efforts to further restrict Kosovo Albanian autonomy and Macedonians grow more fearful that their republic's fast-growing Albanian minority threatens their control. These abuses are likely to provoke wider ethnic Albanian protests in Yugoslavia and the West. US and other Western demarches on behalf of Albanian rights will probably have little or no impact. Political instability in Kosovo and Macedonia will continue at about current levels whether the rights abuses continue or are eased.

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Discussion

Interethnic Rivalries Fueling Human Rights Allegations

Growing tensions between ethnic Albanians and Slavic groups in Yugoslavia's Kosovo Province are leading to sharper mutual recriminations of human rights abuses. The Slavs--who are mainly Eastern Orthodox Serbs but also include the much less numerous but ethnically similar Montenegrins--believe they are being pushed out of their ancestral homeland of Kosovo by a largely Muslim Albanian populace with an alien language and vastly different culture. While the Slavs for many centuries were politically dominant in Kosovo, the Albanians in recent decades have surpassed them in numbers and now account for more than 80 percent of Kosovo's population. Since the late 1960's, Albanians have become the main political force in the province and have used this strength to increase Kosovo's independence from Serbia, of which it is an "autonomous province" under Yugoslavia's federal constitution. [REDACTED]

During the past two years, however, the Slavs have sought to reverse their fortunes under the influence of Serbia's dynamic and controversial Communist Party chief Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic has tried to expand the role of both local Slavs and Serbia itself in Kosovo as part of a broader effort to increase Serbia's voice in the country and increase his national prominence. Milosevic has had some success--for instance, in removing some prominent Kosovo Albanian leaders in recent weeks--and as a result the Albanians have become increasingly frustrated and resentful. [REDACTED]

The ethnic conflict is also affecting Yugoslavia's relations with other countries, including the United States. Belgrade has grown increasingly sensitive over the activity of Albanian and other ethnic emigre groups in the West. It believes that these groups are seeking to undermine its international image by raising human rights concerns with Western governments. It also charges that they are carrying out propaganda and in some cases even terrorist activities against the regime. The Yugoslavs, for instance, recently delivered an unusual demarche to the US, in both Belgrade and Washington, over an official US contact with emigre representatives. Belgrade is likely to remain at least as sensitive in the coming months if, as we expect, ethnic tensions in Kosovo and elsewhere continue to deepen. [REDACTED]

Serb Alegations Against Albanians -- Largely Unfounded

We believe that the bulk of Serb and Montenegrin human rights allegations against the Kosovo Albanians--as put forth mainly by Serb emigre groups in the West, Serbian officials, and the Milosevic-controlled Serbian press--are unfounded. The Serbs allege that the Albanians are conducting a systematic campaign of "terrorism" and "genocide" against Kosovo Slavs, tolerated or even encouraged by the province's mainly Albanian authorities. This campaign allegedly includes rape, arson, murder, assault, grave desecration, vandalism, and other acts to force Serb and Montenegrin emigration from the province. Even informed Slavs apparently believe these allegations, and some Albanian harassment does take place. However, the charges stem more from a climate of fear fueled by sensationalized Serbian press accounts than from concerted, nationalistically-inspired Albanian abuses. Serbia, moreover, is exploiting the charges to discredit Kosovo Albanian leaders and justify a stronger Serbian role in the province. [REDACTED]

The following is an assessment of the validity of the major allegations [REDACTED]
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Rape. Serbian charges that Albanians are frequently raping Serbian women to frighten the Serbs into leaving Kosovo are grossly exaggerated. Kosovo police statistics indicate that between 1982 and 1986 Albanians reportedly raped 16 Serbian women and that only one rape of a Serbian woman by an Albanian took place in 1987-88. Provincial police statistics further indicate Serbian women are nine times more likely to be raped by a Serb than by an Albanian. While Kosovo police statistics are sometimes incomplete and sporadic, we believe these data are largely valid because the Serbs would be quick to publicize specific cases of authorities' covering up an interethnic rape. Moreover federal and Serbian security officials have kept Kosovo police under close scrutiny since major Albanian rioting in 1981 and have offered few if any data contradicting the Kosovo official statistics. [REDACTED]

Arson. Available evidence refutes Serbian allegations that Albanians are systematically attempting to set fire to Serbian homes and crops. According to Yugoslav press reports, the Kosovo police did not find a single fire deliberately set by Albanians against Serbs in January-October 1987, a period during which they investigated 85 percent of the 527 fires reported. In the same period, only 18 percent of the fires in Kosovo occurred on Serb or Montenegrin property, roughly equivalent to their proportion of the Kosovo population. The most celebrated case of alleged arson in Kosovo--of the historic Serbian Orthodox monastery in Pec--was found to be due to faulty wiring. This is a common cause of fires in Kosovo, and we believe Serbian and federal authorities would have discovered evidence of arson if it in fact existed. [REDACTED]

Murder. Despite a widespread perception among Serbs and other Yugoslavs that the lives of Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins are often in jeopardy, Kosovo police statistics reflect no interethnic murders in 1987-88. Between 1982 and 1986, reports indicate two murders of Slavs by Albanians, as well as two of Albanians by Slavs. Serbian and federal police have offered no contradictory data. Albanians, meanwhile, continue to murder one another at high rates; police recorded 44 such murders in 10 months of 1987. [REDACTED]

Assault. Police data from January 1986-May 1988 indicates 130 assaults by Albanians on Serbs and Montenegrins. The data do not indicate the seriousness of the assaults, suggesting that an assault could constitute anything from a shove to a serious altercation. The police statistics also count as a separate category "attempted murder," of which only three instances are listed. We believe that the rate of assaults of Albanians against Slavs in Kosovo--about four a month--may be high enough to fuel insecurity among Slavs but is too low to constitute a campaign. Moreover, while data on Albanian-Albanian assaults is limited, police reports indicate 79 attempted murders of Albanians by Albanians from February-November 1987. This reflects an Albanian tradition of blood feuds and violence to resolve disputes and suggests the frequency of Albanian-Albanian assault is much higher than Albanian-Serb. [REDACTED]

Grave Desecration, Vandalism. There appears to be at least some validity to Serbian charges that Albanians at least occasionally desecrate Serbian gravesites. Local police records show 15 instances in 1987, and more may go unreported. Contrary to Serbian statements, however, the motivation for most such desecrations probably is more youthful mischief than nationalist provocations. Serbs lavish meticulous care and attention on their cemeteries as part of their religious and cultural tradition. Albanians, by contrast, have little special regard for even their own graveyards and often leave them overgrown and uncared for. Albanian children have been observed to vandalize property, cars, and animals for amusement with no regard to the ethnic affiliation of the owner. [REDACTED]

Forced Emigration and Land Sales. Up to several thousand Serbs and Montenegrins emigrate from Kosovo to Serbia and other parts of Yugoslavia each year.

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according to official data. While many emigrants undoubtedly leave because of real or imagined harassment, we believe the far greater proportion leave because of lack of jobs and bleak economic prospects in Kosovo. Kosovo's unemployment rate--at about 37 percent--is more than double the national average of 15 percent. Kosovo also ranks at or near the bottom of the list of most other Yugoslav economic indicators. Serbian claims that Albanians are buying up Serbian land as part of a deliberate effort to encourage Serb emigration also seem invalid, in our view. Demand for land among Kosovo Albanians is enormous. Albanian population growth is the highest in Europe, and Albanian heads of household, by patriarchal tradition, feel obliged to provide a home for each son. The proportion of Kosovo Albanians under 35 years of age, the bracket most likely to enter the home market, is more than 70 percent. Moreover, Albanians are often able to pay Serbs high prices in Western currency earned as guest workers in Western Europe. Serbs know that they can sell for top dollar and take advantage of special benefits. A policy of incentives intended to reverse Serb emigration gives preference for a state-owned apartment and a job to emigres who return to Kosovo. [REDACTED]

Sedition, Subversion. We also believe Serbs are largely incorrect in charging Kosovo Albanian political agitation is inspired, aided, and possibly directed by neighboring Albania and hostile Albanian emigre groups who want to promote the eventual union of Yugoslav Albanian lands with Albania. Tirane probably gathers intelligence in Kosovo, and emigre groups almost certainly provide some covert support for subversive activities. However, we believe any outside aid and direction to Kosovo Albanian political and protest activities are relatively minor. [REDACTED] we believe that the goal of most politically active Kosovo Albanians is to gain the human rights and relative autonomy of other Yugoslav groups rather than secession. [REDACTED]

Kosovo Albanian Rights Allegations -- Largely Justified

We believe the evidence largely bears out Kosovo Albanian assertions that provincial authorities, under strong Serbian and federal pressure, are depriving them of basic rights accorded to other Yugoslav ethnic groups and stipulated by the CSCE agreements to which Yugoslavia is a signatory party. Indeed, these infringements have become more glaring in recent years as the human and political rights picture in other Yugoslav regions has moved closer to West European norms. The following are the main abuses:

Freedom of Speech. Albanians continue to be imprisoned in far greater numbers than other Yugoslavs for criticisms that local authorities interpret as subversive. Of the 1,652 Yugoslavs sentenced in 1981-85 for felonious anti-regime or nationalistic statements, 1,019, or about two-thirds, were from Kosovo and the vast majority of these were Albanians. Overall, according to police statistics and other reporting, roughly 8,150 Albanians have been sentenced for both felony and misdemeanor-level anti-regime statements in 1981-87. While most of these sentences on Albanians are handed down in Kosovo courts by ethnic Albanian judges, these judicial authorities are under much greater pressure from federal and Serbian authorities than is the case in other republics to mete out tough sentences for relatively minor infractions. Convictions for political crimes represent about 3-7 percent of the crimes committed in Kosovo--roughly 20 times the national average. [REDACTED]

Freedom of Assembly. The right of Albanians to peaceably assemble remains more constrained than for any other Yugoslav ethnic group. For more than seven years after the 1981 riots, the threat of imprisonment stifled Albanian demonstrations. By contrast, in 1986-88, ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins demonstrated throughout Kosovo, sometimes daily, without sanction. Demonstrations by other ethnic groups over a variety of causes also were tolerated in this period in every other Yugoslav region. Last November, for the

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first time, more than 100,000 Albanians demonstrated for several days in the Kosovo capital of Pristina and other towns following the forced resignation of two popular Albanian leaders. Federal and Kosovo authorities subsequently denounced the demonstrations and indirectly threatened military intervention while imposing an explicit ban on new gatherings in Kosovo. The ban has been successfully circumvented in several instances, for example, when several hundred workers earlier this month protested further sanctions against the deposed leaders. Nonetheless, we believe that Kosovo and other authorities would repress any new large-scale Albanian demonstrations or repeated Albanian attempts to stage smaller-scale gatherings, such as the latest workers' protest.

Right to Self-Determination. Albanians have fewer rights to self-determination than any other Yugoslav ethnic group, including several--such as Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Slovenes--who are smaller in number. "Autonomous province" status initially gave Kosovo's Albanians the potential to exercise nearly the same rights as enjoyed by republics to control governmental and other institutions. However, since 1985, steadily growing Serbian and federal oversight has narrowed the exercise of these rights in practice. Moreover, Serbian leader Milosevic currently is seeking to revise the republic's constitution to further narrow provincial rights to include Serbian oversight of the judicial and security systems and of educational and cultural institutions.

Macedonian Abuses of Albanian Rights -- Even More Severe

Even more blatant than the abridgement of Albanian rights in Kosovo has been the violation of these rights in the neighboring Republic of Macedonia, where the Albanians constitute a growing minority (currently more than 20 percent) of the region's two million inhabitants. The Slavic Macedonian authorities, concerned to maintain their ethnic predominance in the republic, have passed a series of laws and used other practices to discriminate against Albanians and discourage them from moving into and living in the region. These abuses, [REDACTED] are the worst in Yugoslavia in recent history and include:

- o Destroying traditional walls around many Albanian homes, and severely restricting the sale of property to Albanians, particularly in Ohrid and the capital of Skopje, where many Albanians live;
- o Demolishing 12 Albanian homes in Skopje and scheduling the destruction of 1,700 more homes, which will leave 12,000 Albanians homeless;
- o Forbidding Albanian as the primary language of instruction in mainly Albanian schools, banning more than 250 Albanian-language textbooks, suspending 155 Albanian language teachers over the last year, and disciplining 165 other Albanian teachers for such infractions as keeping their class diaries in Albanian;
- o Prosecuting 17 Albanians, including four minors, for peacefully protesting the above government actions last year, resulting in 4-11 year prison sentences for the demonstrations; expelling from school 18 other Albanians for such protests; and sentencing 40 other Albanians to 60-day jail sentences for misdemeanor-level anti-regime statements.
- o Persecuting the predominantly Albanian Muslim community, for example, by prosecuting the mosque leadership in the town of Kumanovo for religious education of children.

Outlook -- Greater Abuses of Albanians Ahead

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We anticipate that the human and political rights of Kosovo's ethnic Serbs will remain largely intact despite their growing discomfort about being overwhelmed by an increasingly Albanian population. Meanwhile, Albanians will suffer further--and possibly increasingly severe--human rights abuses. We expect that Serbia will make some headway in further narrowing Kosovo's provincial autonomy, using the alleged harrassment of Kosovo Serbs as a justification for their actions, and thereby worsen at least moderately current infringements on freedom of speech, assembly, and self-determination for Albanians. The likely abolition of Article 133 from the Yugoslav penal code, which stipulates imprisonment for anti-regime statements, will not reduce the abuses in Kosovo, as this is only one article used to punish Albanians for such criticisms. Serbia also will probably make some gains in maneuvering more pliant Albanians into positions of authority, mandating greater use of the Serbian language in mainly Albanian schools and institutions, restricting some other Albanian outlets of cultural expression, and maintaining adequate pressure--including a threat of military intervention--on Kosovo authorities to reduce de facto Albanian self-rule. [REDACTED]

In Macedonia, we expect violations of Albanian human rights to become even more blatant as the Albanian population continues to grow and challenge Macedonian ethnic predominance. The Macedonians may use zoning laws even more aggressively to try to expel Albanians from Skopje and other towns. [REDACTED]

US Options -- Little Impact Likely

We believe that any US and other Western demarches and other expressions of concern to the Yugoslavs on behalf of Albanian rights, while consistent with the US policy of upholding human rights, will have minimal impact on the actions of federal and provincial authorities. Serbian officials almost certainly will suspect that hostile Albanian emigres are seeking to manipulate official US actions toward Kosovo. Macedonian authorities will strongly resist any intervention in their affairs. Federal authorities, even if well-intentioned, will probably remain too weak to enforce human rights policy changes on these regional governments. We also believe there is some risk Western actions may be counterproductive if federal authorities misconstrue them, possibly lessening Yugoslav responsiveness on other US concerns. [REDACTED]

The US interest in Yugoslav stability will face at least moderate risks whether or not the abuses of Albanian rights continue. Increasing repression in Kosovo and Macedonia will lead to further Albanian resistance, which could become increasingly organized or violent. Easing the repression will lead to increased expressions of ethnic Albanian political assertiveness. This would aggravate Serbian and Macedonian insecurities, increase agitation by Slavic groups, and possibly spark a violent backlash. [REDACTED]

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